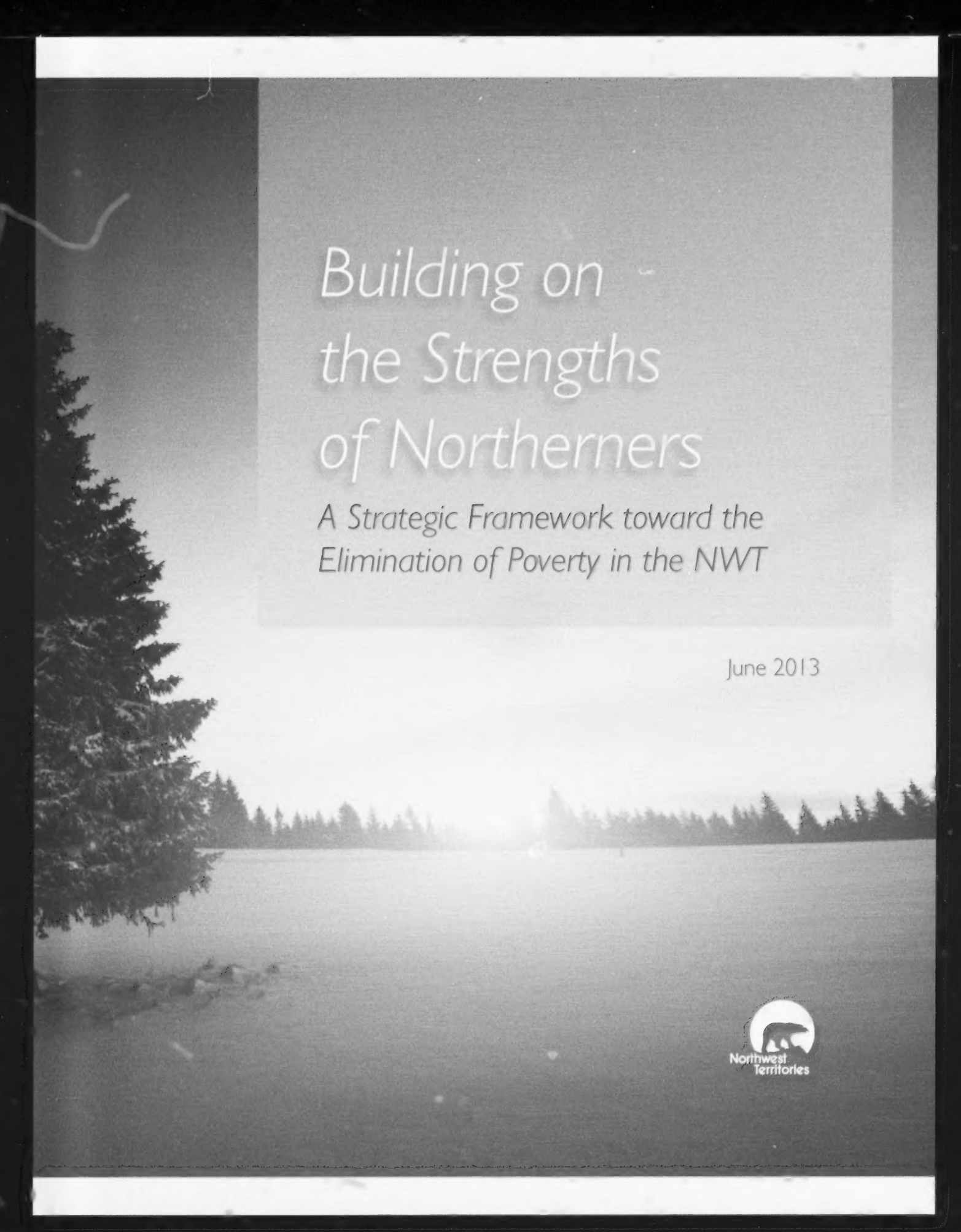

Building on the Strengths of Northerners

A Strategic Framework toward the Elimination of Poverty in the NWT

June 2013

Northwest Territories

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Message from the Premier

I am pleased to release the *NWT Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework*, the basis for an action plan toward the elimination of poverty in the Northwest Territories.

This work began during the 16th Assembly and was confirmed soon after the 17th Legislative Assembly was elected. Poverty reduction is implicit in the goals and priorities of our government. A strong, diversified economy increases employment opportunities where they are most needed. Those opportunities come from investments in education and early childhood development. A strong social safety net is in place for those who need it most, and supports are available to help people enter or re-enter the workforce. All of this work has the goal of reducing and preventing poverty throughout the NWT.

The Strategic Framework is the result of much cooperation between our government, the nonprofit sector, and representatives of Aboriginal governments and industry. We have already seen great commitment to a shared response, and I look forward to implementing the territorial government's part of a shared action plan.

Bob McLeod
Premier of the Northwest Territories

Message from the Minister

I have overseen the development of the *NWT Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework* since soon after my election as Minister. Much of the development work occurred during the 16th Assembly, with workshops, focus groups and sessions in communities. It was directly informed by residents from every region, and benefits from much research and consultation on related issues such as early childhood development, the Shelter Policy Review, the Budget Dialogues, the NWT Labour Force Development Framework, and increases to the minimum wage.

The *Building on the Strengths of Northerners Strategic Framework* confirms how our government will work in partnership with other organizations, including Aboriginal and other northern governments, to reach our shared goal of eliminating poverty in communities. We are committed to reducing dependency on government and making our territory prosperous, and much of this work is already underway. We are encouraged by the partnerships that have already been created, and look forward to new ways of doing business to support our communities to be sustainable and vibrant.

Our government is a leader and champion in the fight against poverty, and the roles set out in this strategic framework reflect that. Our role will expand as we prepare for the opportunities that will come with devolution, self-government and increasing economic development: our residents will have a greater voice in decision-making about how our economy is managed and how resource revenues are invested. We commit to addressing inequalities that keep our people from succeeding in education and the workforce to take full advantage of these opportunities. We commit to doing this in partnership with other agencies and governments to reach shared goals.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Steering Committee that worked extensively on the completion of this strategic framework. Their views and perspectives and their contribution to the development of this strategic framework were of great value.

I am now directing the development of an action plan based on this shared strategic framework. There is a role for everyone in our efforts to create a poverty-free NWT, and I look forward to new partnerships within our respective mandates that will have long-term benefits for all of our people.

Glen Abernethy
Chair of the Social Envelope Committee of Cabinet

Message from the Anti-Poverty Steering Committee

The *NWT Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework* is an experiment in collaboration involving the territorial government, Aboriginal governments, and the business and non-profit sectors. We have been working together to collect information and understand poverty. We've learned from people who have lived it, people who provide services, and those who are concerned about its effects. We have identified five main areas as priorities that we believe will enable all of us to work toward the elimination of poverty and ensure that everyone has a meaningful role and participates in NWT communities, both large and small.

Our vision is to work toward a society in which everyone has what they need to live in dignity. The most important word in our vision is dignity. People must be able to live in dignity whether they are in need of adequate housing, food or support for their growing children. As a society, we must treat all people with respect and provide the supports necessary to live without the anxiety of constant need and the often demoralizing effort required to have those needs met. We must acknowledge that there are people, such as some of those with disabilities, who will always need support, while others may fall into poverty unexpectedly or will need help as a transitional measure; a job isn't the answer for everyone.

As a Steering Committee, we have worked to make the *Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework* a starting point for making positive change for people who live in poverty. When implemented, we hope the actions associated with this strategic framework will provide hope for a different future, a future where everyone has what they need to live in dignity.

NWT Anti-Poverty Strategic Framework Steering Committee
Julie Green, Bob Simpson, Mike Bradshaw, Bronwyn Watters
May 2013

Executive Summary

Building on the Strengths of Northerners is a strategic policy framework, the first step in a long-term plan to eliminate poverty in the NWT. It provides an overview of what we are doing now and what we need to do in the future to realize our vision of a poverty-free NWT.

Our Vision

Building on the strengths of our people and communities, Northerners will have access to the supports they need to live in dignity and free from poverty as active participants in community life.

The framework is based on years of community discussions, research, and interagency work, including the recommendations set out in the *Social Agenda*[1]. It identifies five main priorities for action based on consultation with NWT residents and community-based research:

1) Children and Family Support
2) Healthy Living and Reaching Our Potential
3) Safe and Affordable Housing
4) Sustainable Communities
5) Integrated Continuum of Services

Building on the Strengths of Northerners is our vision for addressing poverty. It makes the case for addressing social inequities: it is the right thing to do for those living in poverty, and it is the fiscally responsible decision for all residents of the NWT.

Each priority has a goal and examples of current and potential initiatives. Where there are gaps, the framework sets direction to guide policy development and program planning. This document links northerners' poverty elimination priorities with the 17th Legislative Assembly's priorities.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) recognizes its leadership role in realizing the vision and goals. The issue of poverty is bigger than any one government, organization, or community, and we need to come together as a territory to work towards the elimination of poverty in the NWT.

Building on the Strengths of Northerners aims to align the policies and programs of partners working to address the root causes of poverty across the territory, harmonizing our work and ensuring a coordinated approach. The next step is to develop and implement an action plan identifying specific activities to be taken by all levels of government, community organizations and the private sector to address each priority. A comprehensive measurement and evaluation plan will assess the impact of this work on the lives of NWT residents living in poverty.

Partnerships are critical to these next phases – everyone with a stake in this territory has an important role to play. This is our guiding document.

[1] *The Social Agenda - A Draft for the People of the NWT* was prepared in April 2002 by a working group with representatives from Aboriginal and public governments as well as non-governmental organizations. It includes key recommendations aimed at changing the overall system within which leaders make policy decisions and service providers deliver programs.

"To live in poverty in Canada is to live with insufficient and often poor quality food. It is to sleep in poor quality and/or unaffordable housing, in homeless shelters, or on city streets and parks. It is on a daily basis to have to make difficult and painful decisions involving trade-offs, such as whether to "pay the rent or feed the kids," pay the electric bill or go to the dentist, buy a new bus pass or forego inviting friends for dinner. To live in poverty is also to be at greater risk of poor health, family or neighborhood violence, and a shorter lifespan. It is to be unable to participate fully in one's community and greater society. And it is to suffer great depths of anxiety and emotional pain."

Source: Canada Without Poverty (2012)

Introduction

Building on the strengths of our people and communities, we envision a future where Northerners have access to the supports they need to live in dignity, free from poverty as active participants in community life..

The NWT is a land of opportunity, possessing an abundance of natural resources and one of the fastest-growing economies in the country. But growing disparities in education, employment and income tell us poverty requires our immediate and collective action.

There is no place for poverty in the NWT. This is the shared belief of Northerners as well as the individuals and organizations who came together to build this framework. Developed under the guidance of a multi-stakeholder steering committee, it builds on extensive community consultation and prior *Social Agenda* recommendations. The perspectives of more than 250 residents from across the territory, combined with further research and analysis, resulted in the vision, guiding principles and strategic priorities presented here.

Poverty is a complex issue with many contributing factors and no single solution. Some of the related issues are already being addressed through focused strategies and initiatives. *Building on the Strengths of Northerners* does not duplicate this work, but is a unifying document that draws connections between strategies and initiatives that address poverty and related issues. It supports the alignment of policies and practices of NWT organizations towards the elimination of poverty and sets out common goals to guide collective action.

Building on the Strengths of Northerners has five core components:

1) a clear vision for poverty reduction efforts in the NWT;
2) five key "pillars for action": priority areas where the GNWT has pledged to play a leading role and where we all must focus our efforts in order to reduce poverty;
3) corresponding goals under each priority area that establish a focus for poverty reduction;
4) an overview of current initiatives that relate to key priorities as well as opportunities for action; and
5) a description of the roles and responsibilities of partners who want to make these outcomes a reality.

Eliminating poverty in the NWT is a challenge that requires cooperation and engagement among every level of government, Aboriginal organizations, community groups and business leaders. *Building on the Strengths of Northerners* is our shared vision. A detailed action plan bringing together activities that align with this framework is the next phase in this process. This plan will be developed collaboratively over the coming months. A performance measurement and monitoring plan will detail outcomes and measurable results to be achieved under every priority of this framework. Achieving the shared vision will require effort from individuals, organizations, and communities across the NWT.

N.B. Unless otherwise noted, all figures and statistics were generated by the Government of the Northwest Territories for the purposes of this report.

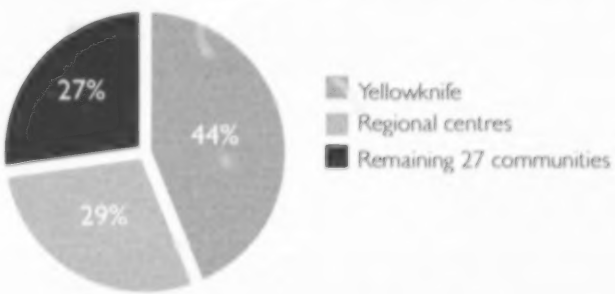
Poverty in the NWT: A Real Issue

Across the territory, there is a widening gap between those who are prospering and those who are struggling. Poverty disproportionately affects vulnerable members of society, including single-parent families, people with low education levels, elders, people with disabilities and those with addictions or mental health issues. Children in poverty are especially vulnerable when their basic needs are not met. While the incidence of poverty is higher within certain groups, poverty is not limited to any gender, ethnicity, or age group. Many Northerners are only one paycheque away from falling into poverty.

As the income gap between the highest and lowest wage earners in the territory widens, so does the gap between incomes in larger and smaller communities. Almost three-quarters of the population lives in Yellowknife and five other regional centres, while approximately 12,000 residents live in the other 27 communities. Unemployment and income assistance rates are higher in the smaller communities, as is the cost of living. Aboriginal residents make up 20% of the population in Yellowknife, half of the population in the five regional centres, and 90% of the population in the other 27 communities. Aboriginal residents also face higher rates of poverty than non-Aboriginal residents.

Inadequate income is a key element of poverty. While income and employment are closely related, there are some Northerners living in poverty who receive most or all of their income from paid employment. Addressing growing income disparities is central to building a more inclusive territory. However, the wage economy is not the only measure of wealth. Many NWT residents put food on the table by hunting,

Percentage of NWT Population by Region



fishing, trapping, and sharing country foods within community networks. Some spend many hours gathering wood for their stoves. Many of these people would not identify themselves as poor. Our approach to the elimination of poverty must be contextual and flexible, recognizing cultural and demographic differences and driven by community-identified needs.

Understanding the territory's past is important if we are to combat poverty today. The impact of colonization, especially residential schools, continues to be visible through addictions, challenges to mental health, and other expressions of trauma. Many residents identify connections with the land and traditional ways of life as the basis for healing, education and a way out of poverty. Supporting the development of inner resources and cultural connections is important to the reconciliation process and part of this framework's broad approach towards the elimination of poverty.

Moving towards the elimination of poverty means dealing with crisis situations now, giving those living in poverty the tools to get out, and preventing those at risk from falling through the cracks. Initiatives and activities that promote greater access to community life are also poverty reduction initiatives. Eliminating program inconsistencies that are an obstacle to effective, comprehensive service delivery will give NWT residents access to the programs and services they need to be full participants in their communities, regardless of their incomes or social situations. Building up Northerners' physical, social, human, personal, and financial assets will move us towards the elimination of poverty.

Elements of a comprehensive approach to addressing poverty

By The Numbers:

A Snapshot of the Northwest Territories

Demographics (2012)

- NWT population : 43,349
- Total Aboriginal population: 22,065 (51%)
- Yellowknife population: 19,752

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2013

Economic (2012)

- GDP: $3521M
- NWT unemployment rate: 8.1%
- Canadian unemployment rate: 7.2%

Sources: NWT Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Activity NWT, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2012

Education

Graduation rates for the NWT in 2012 by community type:

- NWT: 56%
- Yellowknife: 68%
- Regional Centres: 64%
- Smaller communities: 37%
- Overall, graduation rates in the NWT are over 20% lower than the national average.
- 22% of NWT residents have a university degree or diploma.

Sources: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

Housing

Percentage of homes in core need:

- NWT: 19%
- Yellowknife: 9.6%
- Regional Centres (Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik): 15.1%
- Rest of Communities: 37.6%

Percentage of houses owned by occupants (all NWT homes): 52%

Note: If a dwelling has a housing problem and a total household income below the Core Need Income Threshold (as determined by the NWT Housing Corporation), it is considered to be in core need.

A dwelling is considered to have a housing problem if it does not meet one or more of these three conditions: suitability, adequacy and affordability. Suitability is defined as having the appropriate number of bedrooms for the characteristics and number of occupants as determined by the National Occupancy Standard requirements. Adequate housing must have running water, an indoor toilet, bathing and washing facilities and must not require major repairs. Affordable housing costs less than 30% of household income where shelter costs include utilities, water, heat, insurance,property taxes, land lease costs, rent or mortgage payments.

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, Housing Conditions, 2009

Income and Income Assistance (2010)

Average personal income:

- NWT: $53,978
- Yellowknife: $64,350
- Regional Centres (Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik): $52,627
- Other Communities: $37,797

Average family income:

- NWT: $113,934
- Yellowknife: $138,620
- Regional Centres (Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik): $109,125
- Other Communities: $78,638
- Average total family income for lone-parent families (NWT) : $50,933
- Average total family income for two-parent families (NWT): $133,875

Families earning <$30,000:

- All of NWT: 1,840 (16% of all families)
- Yellowknife: 490
- Regional Centres (Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik): 490
- Other Communities: 860

Families earning >$75,000:

- All of NWT: 11,230 (62% of all families)
- Yellowknife: 5,190
- Regional Centres (Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik): 2,790
- Other Communities: 3,250

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2010

Income Assistance in the NWT (2010)

- *Beneficiaries (monthly average): 2,313*
- *Cases (monthly average): 1,429*
- *Total payments made: $15,074,000*

Population incidence of low income (before-tax low income measures) for NWT persons: 17%

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2013

Total households experiencing food insecurity: 1,855

Source: Statistics Canada, 2007-2008

Tradition and Culture

- Aboriginal persons able to speak an Aboriginal language: 39% (2009)
- NWT residents who hunted and fished: 39% (2008)
- NWT residents who trapped: 6% (2008)
- NWT residents who produced arts and crafts: 8% (2008)
- Households where half or more of meat/fish consumed is harvested: 28% (2008

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2013

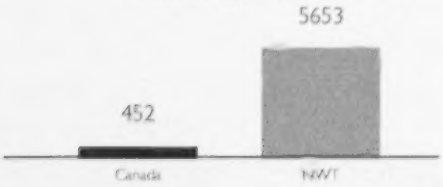
Health

- In 2004, life expectancy from birth in NWT was 76.5 years
- For 2007-2009, life expectancy from birth in Canada was 81 years
- Proportion of respondents who self-reported life satisfaction as "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied":
  - NWT: 93%
  - Canada: 92%
- Proportion of respondents who self-reported their health as "Excellent" or "Very Good":
  - NWT: 52%
  - Canada: 61%

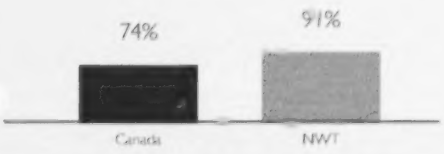
Source: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/ CCHS Master table, 2009.

Shelter Use by Women and Children

Shelter Admission Rate per 100,000 Women Aged 15+



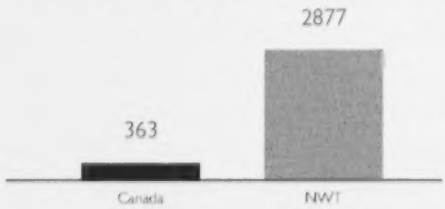
Women and Children Shelter Occupancy Rate



Data source for Shelter use: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11495-eng.pdf

Family Violence Rates

Victims of police Reported Violent Crimes by Intimate Partner per 100,000 population (2010)



Data source for Family Violence: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643-eng.pdf

How Poverty Costs Us

Poverty has both economic and social costs. On both fronts, there is a strong case to be made for investing in the elimination and prevention of poverty. Research has shown that as a society, we spend far more money on services to help people who live in poverty than we would on addressing the root causes of social inequities[2]. A long-term investment approach is needed to eliminate poverty, not just alleviate symptoms[3].

Economic Costs of Poverty

Current spending on poverty falls into three categories: Direct, indirect and social costs. Most of the GNWT's **direct** costs of poverty are absorbed by specific social programs. Examples of these programs and the 2012/13 budgets are listed in the table below.

3 Ways Poverty Costs Us

Direct costs
Social programs such as income support and services for people living in poverty.

Indirect costs
The burden of poverty is felt in emergency wards, law enforcement, the criminal justice system and other public services.

Social costs
Lost potential, poor health, diminished contribution to community life.

GNWT Programs	2012/13 Budget
Subsidy for Public Housing	$39.6 million
Transitional Rent Supplement Program	$1.0 million
Homeownership Repairs	$8.8 million
Income Assistance Program	$15.8 million
Senior Home Heating Subsidy	$1.7 million
Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit	$2.5 million
Emergency Shelters	$2.7 million
TOTAL	**$72.1 million**

These are the costs of just a few of the programs available to NWT residents living in poverty or at risk of poverty. Other programs such as the NWT Child Tax Benefit and the Territorial Workers' Supplement add significantly to these figures. There are also substantial expenses incurred by Aboriginal governments and the federal government in the form of social programs and housing initiatives directed at those living in poverty. Additional funds come in the form of charitable donations from NWT residents ($7.9 million in 2010) that go to non-profit organizations that offer poverty-related initiatives and programs.

In addition to the direct costs of poverty, we know that indirectly poverty adds significantly to the cost of delivering public services. The ripple effects of social inequalities are felt by the territory's health, education, and criminal justice systems. Although these are core services for all Northerners, people living in poverty use them

[2] Gaetz, S. (2012). *The Real Cost of Homelessness: Can We Save Money By Doing the Right Thing?* Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

[3] National Council of Welfare. (2011). *The dollars and sense of solving poverty* (National Council of Welfare Rep. 130). Ottawa, ON: Author.

[4] Statistics Canada (2012). *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Tables Report, 2010*. Available online at http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-649-X&lang=eng

more heavily. People living in crowded or sub-standard conditions are more likely to catch communicable diseases, and the World Health Organization reports low socioeconomic status as a significant risk factor for both mental illness and non-communicable diseases.[5] Poverty leads to stress, poor nutrition, inadequate housing and unstable social environments. Someone who is homeless may end up in police custody to prevent them from freezing to death. A youth in poverty is more likely to move in and out of the education system. Low graduation rates lead to greater costs in health and social services, education, employment, and law enforcement. Not graduating from high school has also been clearly linked to lower economic productivity and poorer health. Some seniors may not have access to the resources needed to age in comfort and health. People in poverty are more likely to use the health care system because of physical and mental health issues or illness, and are more likely to face an early death.

While it is possible to calculate the amount of money spent on programs and services, there's no definitive way to calculate the social costs. The impacts of poverty include a decreased sense of well-being, poorer health outcomes and overall lowered quality of life. People living in poverty have to spend a lot of time and energy on finding enough food to eat, a place to sleep, getting to and from where they need to go and staying safe. They spend time and energy simply gaining access to essential services and supports such as applying for income assistance, meeting monthly requirements for paperwork, looking for transitional or permanent housing and finding child care. This is all time that can't be spent on training and education, parenting, hunting and trapping, or looking for work. Lost opportunities for children in poverty can carry particularly serious long-term costs. Inadequate housing, food, and early childhood development opportunities have lasting effects on growth and development.

Research in Canada and internationally tells the same story: tackling the root causes of poverty leads to a reduction in health and social program expenditures. Given current GNWT budgets for education, health care, social services, housing, policing, and corrections, in addition to expenditures by Aboriginal and community governments as well as the private sector, the potential savings are significant. Further investments in education and training will increase the number of residents who can contribute their skills to building the NWT economy and participating fully in communities. Investments in these areas will achieve better human and financial outcomes. Greater equity in income distribution has been shown to lower stress and improve health and social outcomes for everyone in a community, not just for those who live in poverty.[6] Over time, this investment results in lower poverty rates; reduced strain on health care and other public service systems; and healthier, stronger Northerners.

[5] See the WHO web site (http://www.who.int/mental_health/mhgap/consultation_global_mh_action_plan_2013_2020/en/index.html).

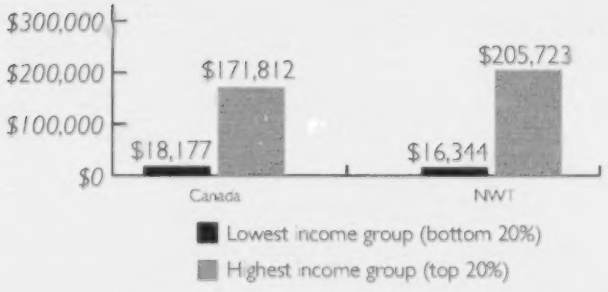
[6] Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. (2010). *The Spirit level: Why equality is better for everyone*. London: Penguin.

Governments are already investing in poverty prevention programs. For example, the GNWT and Aboriginal governments have made significant investments in early childhood programs and supports. Of all possible areas for government spending, those targeting improvements in early childhood development show the highest potential benefit to be gained through the investment. Economic analyses of evidence-based programs conducted in other parts of Canada have shown up to a 7-to-1 return on investment during the first 2 years of life and a 2-to-1 return in the 2 to 5 age period. Investing in people early on will lead to healthier, more productive citizens.

The NWT is a wealthy territory, enjoying the highest GDP and highest individual income per capita in Canada. The economic future of the territory is bright, but the substantial gap in wealth between top-earning residents and those in the lowest income bracket is dismaying.

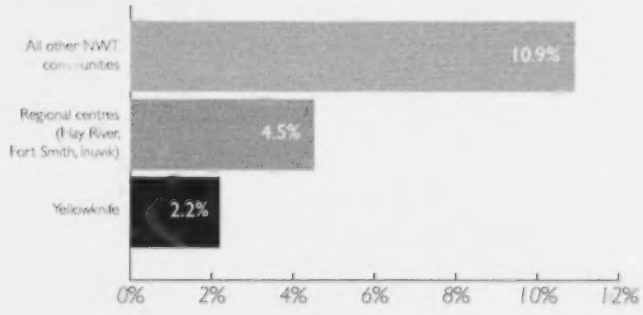
Comparative studies of countries with different GDPs tell us that growing wealth does not, in and of itself, address social problems. A balanced distribution of wealth is critical to the overall well-being of NWT residents. This is not accomplished through handouts or stop-gap measures, but through long-term investments in people themselves. Effective poverty reduction initiatives are closely linked to action on the social determinants of health, including education, housing, early childhood development, food security, and employment. These are reflected in the five key areas for action described in the next section of this framework.

Average Household Income by Lowest and Highest Income Group



Compared with most developed countries, Canada has a higher rate of poverty and a faster-growing gap between rich and poor. This gap is wider in the NWT than in other parts of Canada.

Percentage of Population Receiving Income Assistance by Region (2009)



Life in One NWT Community–
A Social and Economic Case Study

Through harvesting or sharing, most households in Paulatuk depend on the traditional (subsistence) economy for the majority of meat and fish they eat. In 2008, Paulatuk had the highest consumption of country food of all Inuvialuit communities, with 75% of households obtaining over half of their meat and fish from harvesting. Between 1996 and 2011, the population increased by 15% to 341 and the community is expected to continue to grow. Almost a third of residents are 15-24 years old.

The main employers are the hamlet office, the school, the Northern Store, and the health centre. There are ninety-nine jobs in Paulatuk, including 34 filled part-time/casual positions. 22% of households operate on one full-time employment income and additional full or part-time employment income and have an average total household income of $76,523. A further 26% of households rely on one full-time or multiple part- time incomes, for an average household income of $49,499. Another quarter of the population exists with only one part-time employment salary for an average household income of $35,624. Households with no employment income (28%) have an average household income of $17,172.

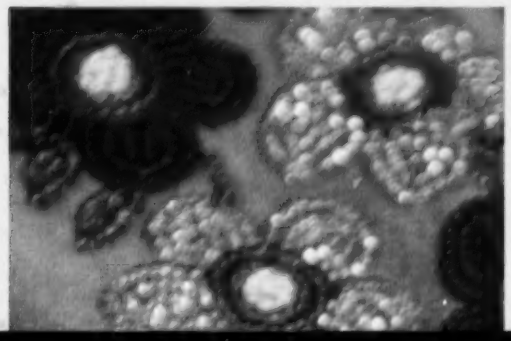
The NWT Housing Corporation and Paulatuk Housing Association provide 54 public housing units, including five units rented to teachers. The net housing subsidy value was $1,693,750 – equal to $4967 per person. Despite this level of subsidy, over half of households are in core need and the quality of housing is a subject of concern.

77% of households received some form of transfer income, ranging from the Canada Child Tax Benefit to NWT Income Assistance. The number of households receiving Income Support transfer payments rose from 79 in 2010 to 92 in 2011.

There is strong desire for more employment as one of the most direct and accessible means of improving the economic situation of people in the community. In order for these jobs to be staffed by local residents, more young people in Paulatuk must pursue formal education. The economic limits that create poverty are clear, but so is the essential contribution that cultural practices and values make to the well-being of the socially and economically vulnerable households in the community. Sharing harvests helps ensure nutritious food can be widely accessed, and the sharing of housing ensures that no one goes without shelter. Participation in traditional activities promotes community cohesion, and programs that support traditional activities are a clear means of addressing some of the gaps in the local economy.

In the longer term, even if the most accessible means to economic improvement are realized, Paulatuk faces a growing population and an economic base that will not increase at a comparable rate without major industrial activity. While an immediate focus on how economically disadvantaged households can improve their circumstances is crucial, ensuring future opportunity for a good quality of life to each person in this community will require all stakeholders to work together.

Source: IRC, 2012. *The economic life of Inuvialuit households in Paulatuk.* Inuvik, NWT



Our Shared Vision, Key Priorities, and Guiding Principles

We envision a future where Northerners have access to the supports they need to live in dignity and free from poverty as active participants in community life.

This framework reflects the views of a wide variety of stakeholders, including public and Aboriginal governments, non-governmental organizations, business and labour groups and some NWT residents living in poverty.[7] The vision, guiding principles and key priority areas were developed through group workshops, surveys, focus groups, and reviews of current research. They build on and support the recommendations for action on social issues put forward in the *Social Agenda for the NWT.*

Our vision for the NWT is this: **Building on the strengths of our people and communities, Northerners will have access to the supports they need to live in dignity and free from poverty as active participants in community life.**

Working together, we can fulfill this vision.

Community representatives identified five priority areas central to achieving this vision:

1) Children and Family Support;
2) Healthy Living and Reaching Our Potential;
3) Safe and Affordable Housing;
4) Sustainable Communities; and
5) Integrated Continuum of Services.

An implementation plan will link each priority to clear, measurable objectives.

During community roundtables, it was agreed that all of us have a basic human right to adequate food, shelter, education, self-determination and freedom from discrimination.

We are committed to the following principles as we work together to achieve a Poverty Free NWT:

- **Respect and equality are essential to anti-poverty work.**
- **People are our most important resource.**
- **How we do things is as important as what we do.**

[7] For more information on the process we followed as we worked together, see Appendix A.

Priority 1:
Children and Family Support

What do we want?

Goal: Children and families lead healthy lives free from poverty in a safe and nurturing environment.

Our children are precious, full of potential, and also incredibly vulnerable. Their growth and development can be seriously affected by poverty. Our children deserve to grow up in a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment. Children who are well cared for in their earliest years are far more likely to be successful in school and be healthier throughout their lives. Children with a good start in life are less likely to fall behind in school, get into trouble with the law, depend on social services, live in poverty, or have issues with addictions. It is everyone's responsibility to break the cycle of poverty by strengthening families' ability to meet the needs of their children and by strengthening communities' ability to meet the needs of their families.

NWT Residents Said:

- *Even before a child is born, mothers want safe and healthy pregnancies so their newborns get the best possible start in life.*
- *Healthy families are critical to ensuring children have what they need for normal development.*

What's happening now?

Examples of Current Initiatives Promoting Healthy Children and Families

SUPPORTING HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Breakfast for Learning NWT offers nutrition programs throughout the NWT. In 2012/13 a total of 36 school-based breakfast programs and 408,680 breakfasts were served through Breakfast for Learning NWT. **The Food First Foundation** is developing nutrition education programs in schools to encourage a healthy population of children and youth.

The YWCA's **Project Child Recovery** promotes alternatives to aggression and works to prevent violence in the lives of children. It is a free program targeted at children who have witnessed family violence. It is accessible for youth ages 6 to 14 through schools and partner agencies.

HEALTHY PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND INFANCY

The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) is focused on the health and well-being of pregnant women, new mothers and babies. It includes nutrition screening, education and counselling; maternal nourishment; and breastfeeding education and support.

The Maternal Health Program provides care to women from pre-conception to six weeks after delivery.

Breastfeeding programs promote and support public health efforts to make breastfeeding the preferred option for infant feeding.

Research that Supports this Priority

Alternatives North/ Lutra Associates (2006) *Investing in our Future:* The Alternatives North NWT Child Care Survey

NWT Literacy Council with Alternatives North (2012) *Early Childhood and Poverty: Summary of Research*

NWT Family Violence Coalition (2011). *Recommendations for Addressing Gaps, Shifting Attitudes, and Enhancing Services to Reduce Family Violence and Abuse in the NWT.*

The Healthy Family Program is a voluntary home visitation program for young mothers and new parents. It focuses on the importance of the nurturing parent-child relationship in order to increase the child's developmental opportunities and improve health outcomes.

The **Infant and Child Health Program** is for all children from birth to school entry. It includes breastfeeding support, immunization, infant/child physical assessment, growth monitoring, hearing and vision screening at school entry, parental education on child nutrition, safety and growth, and development.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Programs aim to support and deliver FASD awareness, prevention and support to communities.

PROMOTION AND PREVENTION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Oral health promotion is delivered at the community level by dental therapists, community health representatives, wellness workers, and day care operators. Oral health campaigns for ages 0-6 include Little Teeth are a Big Deal and Lift the Lip.

The Health Promotion Fund supports community-based projects to improve health and wellness, promote healthy lifestyles and reduce preventable diseases. The fund supports projects for babies, children, youth, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and their families.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Rehabilitation services help to improve and maintain the functional independence of children and adults with impairments resulting from injury, chronic disorders or disability. Services are provided in the home and health service agencies, and include assessment, treatment, intervention and education.

Respite care provides temporary relief to those who are caring for family members who might otherwise need permanent placement in a facility outside the home. Respite programs provide breaks for families and other caregivers of children with a developmental delay or disability. This supports and maintains the primary caregiver relationship.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is working with the Office of the Auditor General to improve the delivery of **Income Security programs**. The Department has accepted all of the recommendations in the OAG's March 2013 report and is making sure recipients are eligible for programs, putting controls and audits in place to prevent payment errors, and improving staff training.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Child Care Spaces Available for Children 4 and Under (2012)		
Region	0-4 Population	Spaces
Beaufort Delta	621	287
Sahtu	163	59
Yellowknife	1,518	1,045
Tlicho	361	145
South Slave	473	286
Dehcho	174	94

The **Early Childhood Program** supports licensed child care facilities and early childhood education and care programs to ensure high-quality positive learning environments for children 0-6 years of age. Across the NWT, there is a gap between the number of available child care spaces and the number of children who might need these services, limiting options for families.

The **Healthy Children Initiative** provides funding to communities to enhance existing early childhood programs and services.

The **Early Childhood Intervention Program**, operated by the NWT Disabilities Council provides early intervention services for children between birth and school entry who have disabilities and/or developmental delays.

Child and Family Resource Centres, currently being piloted in two communities, combine programs and services such as parenting education, nutrition, rehabilitation services, respite, toy lending, library resources and home visiting programs.

Language Nests are an immersion-based approach where young children acquire their traditional Aboriginal language naturally in immersion settings, fostering intergenerational language transference.

Where do we need to do more?

Improve access to, and participation in, early childhood development programs, services and supports for children and families	*Improve the quality of early childhood development programs, services and supports*	*Increase support to families in accessing appropriate and affordable child care*

How are we going to get there?

- By increasing access to affordable, high-quality early learning programs and child care services, expanding early intervention and assessment aimed at infants and new parents, and improving coordination and integration.
- By increasing promotion, awareness and education initiatives for families and communities.
- By supporting women who do not typically access prenatal services to have healthy pregnancies and supporting families to have positive early parenting experiences.

Priority 2:

Healthy Living and Reaching our Potential

What do we want?

Goal: NWT residents have access to the supports they need for healthy living and reaching their full potential.

Poverty profoundly affects a person's ability to achieve and maintain good mental and physical health. Promoting healthy living requires action on a variety of fronts, including addiction prevention and treatment, health promotion and the prevention of violence, and supports for those living with disability or chronic illness. There are gaps in programs and services for youth between the ages of 16 and 19 that need to be addressed. Literacy is also important, as low literacy contributes to inequalities in education, employment opportunities, income, and, by extension, options for good housing and other essentials for healthy living. A critical piece in encouraging literacy is to ensure adult learners are provided with the supports they need to develop their literacy skills.

We need to ensure the right combination of services, treatments and supports are available in the NWT, identify local solutions and work to remove any barriers to full participation in work, education and community life.

What's happening now?

Examples of Current Initiatives Promoting Healthy Living and Reaching Our Potential

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

To provide individuals with an alternative to leaving their community for addictions treatment, the Fort Smith Health and Social Services Authority introduced the **Matrix Intensive Outpatient Treatment Program**, which is a day program for addictions treatment that can be accessed by anyone in the community. Additionally, **on-the-land programs** for mental health and addictions are available to every community in the NWT. Examples include arranging for elders to teach young adults traditional knowledge and skills, hosting hunting and trapping camps with elders and young men, on-the-land workshops, and on-the-land wellness retreats.

HEALTH PROMOTION

The **Healthy Choices Framework** is a government-wide approach to supporting NWT residents to make healthy choices. **The Health Café** encourages young people to play an active role in health discussions, seeking support and receiving treatment if they require it. The **'My Voice, My Choice'** campaign empowers young people to speak out about addictions - how they have been affected, how their loved ones have been affected, and how their communities have been affected. **The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training

NWT Residents Said:

- *There is a lack of drug and alcohol workers, treatment centres, and aftercare supports for those who try to address their addictions. Without ongoing support, people may relapse.*
- *Youth between the ages of 16 and 19 fall through the cracks of government services. Once they reach the age of 16, they are often no longer in foster care, yet unable to access social assistance, including public housing, until age 19.*
- *People living with mental health and addiction issues are far more likely to be at risk of poverty, as they are less likely to be able to access supports, succeed in employment situations, or have stable housing.*
- *Many wellness services are available but may not be easy to access. Those in need may not know that the services exist. Prerequisites, like lengthy application processes, may be barriers.*
- *Good jobs require good education. Parents want their children to graduate from high school and go on to further training, college or university.*

course teaches people to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and guide a person to appropriate professional help.

The Community Wellness Planning Engagement Project promotes community interaction with the goal of identifying local priorities to build healthier communities. Through this process, communities have brought young people together with older adults to discuss what is important to them. A new framework for wellness funding will enable communities to build local solutions that support local priorities.

Healthy Eating – Health and Social Services works in partnership with other departments, organizations and agencies in support of ideal growth and development, the reduction of childhood obesity, increased access to healthy foods and food skills for families.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The **NWT Recreation and Parks Association** works with communities across the NWT to promote healthy living through active recreation. Their programs include Everyone Gets to Play, a community mobilization tool kit to enhance the lives of Canadian children in low-income families through increased access to recreation. **Sport North** operates KidSport NWT, a program to remove financial barriers that prevent children from playing organized sports.

DISABILITIES

Yellowknife Association for Community Living provides a variety of supports, including skills training and employment placements to individuals with cognitive disabilities. Clients originate from communities throughout the NWT. **Respite services** are offered free of charge, allowing families and caregivers a much-needed break from supporting people with disabilities and other health issues. **The Learning Supports for Persons with Disabilities (LSPD) Fund** provides financial support for individuals with disabilities to pursue their learning goals. Student Financial Assistance also offers financial support to students with disabilities through the **NWT Grants for Students with Permanent Disabilities** program.

SENIORS

Health and Social Services provides funding annually to the NWT Seniors' Society to support the Seniors' **Advisory Council** and **Community Outreach Programming** including priorities to address elder abuse, and a **toll-free service information line** (1-800-661-0878).

LITERACY

Literacy Outreach Centres deliver a wide range of culturally appropriate literacy activities and offers instruction designed to meet the needs of individuals with low literacy skills.

The **NWT Literacy Council**, funded by ECE, develops and delivers family literacy training, develops resources, provides support to communities to develop and deliver family literacy programs, and promotes family literacy.

The Community Literacy Development Fund (CLDF) provides financial assistance to community organizations to develop and deliver local programs that will increase literacy skills and raise awareness of the importance of literacy.

Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) programs are provided by Aurora College in 23 community learning centres and three campuses. These programs offer adults the opportunity to upgrade their basic education from grade 1-12.

Adult Recognition Model (ARM) – ARM enables adults enrolled in ALBE programs the opportunity to receive NWT high school diplomas.

Financial Literacy Modules – The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has developed a series of modules on financial literacy for adult education students that, when completed, will provide adults with the skills and confidence to manage their personal finances.

NWT Literacy (aged 16-65)	
Level 1 Literacy	**Level 2 Literacy**
Approximately 4,000 people in the NWT are at Level 1	Approximately 7,000 people in the NWT are at Level 2
Gender • 62% male • 38% female	Gender • 71% male • 44% female
Employment Status • 56% employed • 22% unemployed	Employment Status • 47% employed • 11% unemployed
Education • 70% less than high school • 18% completed high school • 12% had post-secondary	Education • 37% less than high school • 29% completed high school • 34% had post-secondary
Mother Tongue • 60% English • 40% other	Mother Tongue • 74% English • 20% other
Aboriginal Status • 75% Aboriginal	Aboriginal Status • 48% Aboriginal

Level 1: A person has difficulty dealing with any printed material.
Level 2: A person can deal with material that is clear and well laid out.
Level 3: A person can understand and use the information needed for daily life.
Levels 4 and 5: A person can understand and use complex written material.

- Roughly 42.5% of working-age adults (16-65) had an average prose literacy score at Levels 1 & 2.
- Experts believe people need Level 3 to get a job in today's knowledge-based world.
- Ideally, the average literacy score should be Level 3 and above.
- Approximately 70% of Aboriginal adults are below Level 3.

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

GirlSpace is a free program offered weekly to girls aged 8 to 13 by YWCA Yellowknife. Its focus is to engage the issues they face as girls, including making sense of the changes in their lives and bodies, media misrepresentation, bullying and other forms of violence.

Where do we need to do more?

People need to know what mental health services are available and where they can go for support, regardless of where they live

Close gaps so that hard-to-reach individuals and groups are not missed

Improve academic achievement, including graduation rates and numeracy and literacy skills

How are we going to get there?

- By helping people to find the right combination of culturally appropriate services, treatments, and supports.
- By eliminating program barriers and improving outreach to marginalized populations.
- By ensuring parents are engaged in the education of their children and students have the supports they need to learn.

Research that Supports this Priority

Alternatives North (2012). *Addressing Poverty in the NWT -- An Appreciative Inquiry of Program Success*

Dene Nation (2012) *The Dene Nation (Northwest Territories) First Nations Regional Health Survey*

Priority 3:
Safe and Affordable Housing

What do we want?

Goal: Everyone has a roof over their head and a safe and affordable place to call home.

Shelter is pivotal to the long-term well-being of NWT residents and communities. A person's home is often the foundation for their own and their family's lives. For residents of the Northwest Territories:

- Their home should be where family members and friends gather, it should provide children a safe and secure place to grow and learn, and it should be a source of pride for the occupants;
- Their home should be a safe environment that contributes to the health and well-being of all household members, it should be in good condition, and be the right size for the occupants; and
- Housing should be affordable, meaning that households spend no more than 30% of their income on a place to live, while there is also an individual responsibility to make appropriate decisions regarding their housing.

This vision for housing is not the reality for many residents, particularly those who live in poverty. Housing is linked with overall well-being; it contributes to and is an outcome of activities related to the other priorities that have been identified as critical to eliminating poverty. Addressing housing needs is a priority of the 17th Legislative Assembly.

Governments, communities, families and individuals all play a role in housing. Given the size and remoteness of many communities, housing is also a key piece of cost of living - a critical factor in considering poverty.

Housing supports need to be considered within the context of the housing continuum. However, many of the elements of the continuum are interconnected, as actions that support one element of the continuum can affect other elements.

NWT Residents Said:

- *We need to address issues related to availability and affordability of housing and ensure that housing programs and policies do not create barriers or disincentives for employment.*
- *Different approaches are needed in smaller and more remote communities, which face different housing issues than do communities with a private rental market.*
- *Many of the smaller communities need more people who are skilled in house maintenance and repair.*
- *There is a need for safe houses and transitional housing. Shelters are a basic need, and housing issues affect the safety of communities.*

Housing Continuum

Elements of the housing continuum, and issues related to each, are often quite different in smaller non-market communities than in larger communities. These differences need to be reflected in the supports that are provided to housing. Availability, adequacy, suitability and affordability issues related to housing are frequently noted. These issues are more acute for those who live in poverty, and particularly for single people, youth and seniors.

An overview of current programs and services on elements of the housing continuum that have a direct effect on low-income residents and help reduce poverty are outlined below.

What's Happening Now?

Examples of Current Initiatives Promoting Safe and Affordable Housing

ADDRESSING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

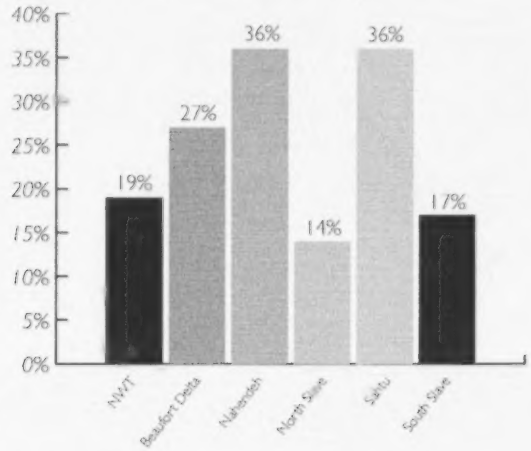
The new **public housing rent scale** makes rents simpler, fairer and more predictable. It also addresses the disincentive to work, which has been often cited in the past as a major barrier for people trying to get out of poverty.

Revisions are being made to supports for residents to purchase homes. These changes will expand the pool of eligible clients and make homeownership more viable in smaller NWT communities. **The Public Housing Purchase Program** is being introduced to support some public housing clients to purchase their units.

The NWT Housing Corporation is working with clients who hold mortgages with them to offer **revised mortgage balances and affordable repayment options.** This initiative will give clients a fresh start and allow them to avoid legal processes related to past arrears.

Subsidies are now in place to mitigate housing affordability challenges faced by the working poor through the **Transitional Rent Supplement Program**. This program provides a subsidy to residents living in market rentals who pay more than 30% of their income towards shelter.

Percentage of NWT Homes in Core Housing Need by Region (2009)



IMPROVING THE HOUSING STOCK

Significant investments are being made to improve the quality of the housing stock. This includes repairs and retrofits to public housing and replacing units when necessary. Investments are also being made in new facilities. Four new independent housing facilities for seniors are planned for smaller communities and the Joe Greenland Centre in Aklavik will be replaced. These facilities will support the continuum of care for seniors.

Improved homeownership supports are also in place with the introduction of SAFE, an emergency repair program, and **CARE**, a preventative maintenance program, which is being changed to improve support and accessibility.

SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

There are a wide variety of supports to address homelessness and the impact of homelessness. A number of **soup kitchens and food programs, emergency shelters,** and **transitional housing** are operated by NGOs with support often provided by the federal, territorial, community, or Aboriginal governments.

Homelessness programs are being improved to provide additional stability for community groups operating projects under the **Small Community Homelessness Fund.** The GNWT has also finalized an MOU for a $2.3 million contribution towards Betty House, a transitional housing project for women and children.

STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABILITY

In partnership with the federal government, the GNWT is working to establish predictable, stable on-going funding for operating social housing. The GNWT has also developed an overall strategic approach related to declining federal funding, and during the 17th Legislative Assembly considerable investments have been made to offset the decline in federal contributions to operate existing public housing.

Where do we need to do more?

More affordable housing available to NWT residents on a fixed or low income

Housing quality in smaller communities is improved

Develop a northern approach to the Housing First model that centers on quickly providing homeless people with housing and then providing additional services

How are we going to get there?

- By supporting communities in promoting safe and affordable housing and improving accessibility, quality and sustainability.

Priority 4:
Sustainable Communities

What do we want?

Goal: Sustainable communities managing their resources based on current need while ensuring that adequate resources are available for future generations.

NWT Residents Said:

- *There is sometimes a disconnect between government funding priorities and valued community programs and services. Good programs can be cut when the funding runs out.*
- *Northerners expect a balanced approach between economic and social development.*
- *The business community has a role to play in poverty reduction initiatives. Providing employment opportunities for those most at risk for poverty is one way they can be involved.*

Community governments play a critical role in administering programs and services to residents, setting the vision and establishing priorities, and developing infrastructure within their areas of responsibility. They often work in partnership with Aboriginal governments, the territorial government, and the federal government on community priorities.

The non-renewable resource sector, most notably diamonds and oil, plays a large role in the territorial economy. In addition to the direct role, many service industries like transportation, wholesale trade, and business service companies are directly linked with resource activities. Construction, retail services, tourism and governments also play an important role in the economy and labour market.

The traditional economy – including harvesting, trapping and arts and crafts – is an important part of the economy, especially in smaller communities. Local food production, including hunting, fishing, gardening, and other harvesting to support food security, are part of the economic fabric upon which all small communities have been built. Supporting residents in caring for those in need, including elders and the ill or disabled is a critical component in developing a cohesive, sustainable community.

Even with the overall strong economic potential of the NWT, the lack of jobs and limited formal education in some communities has led to high unemployment rates. This is particularly true in smaller NWT communities.

Northerners believe that we need a mixed economy to be sustainable and balanced. As we work towards a prosperous NWT with opportunities for all, there is a need to broaden into other sectors that provide residents with new ways to support themselves, including agriculture and tourism. We also need to capitalize on the skills we already have through an expanded arts sector, hunting and trapping initiatives as well as encouraging the development of new "made in the north" expertise. Making raw materials available to artists ensures that arts and fine crafts traditions continue to be a viable way to make a living in the NWT.

The size of the NWT affects the sustainability of our communities. The high cost of living can be traced, in part, to the lack of infrastructure and high energy costs. Higher costs for basic goods like food, clothing and shelter create challenges for economic development and employment. Considerable investments have been made to address energy costs and to improve transportation and communication infrastructure.

Reducing poverty by ensuring we have sustainable, cohesive communities requires governments to work together to plan and deliver community and economic development programs. This will help us to more effectively address issues and prevent service overlap.

What's Happening Now?

Examples of Initiatives Promoting Sustainable Communities

HARVESTING

The **Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs Program** provides trappers with the means to trap fur and earn income. The estimated value of the fur industry this trapping season is $1.8 million.

The **Take a Kid Trapping/Harvesting Program** provides an orientation to hunting, trapping and harvesting for school-aged youth. The aim of the program is to encourage participation and provide an option for youth in small communities to earn an income. Over 2,200 youth participate each year.

To support local food security, the GNWT offers programming that directly encourages and supports participation in traditional harvesting activities. The **Community Harvesters Assistance Program** is one example of this support. Several Aboriginal governments also invest in their beneficiaries' traditional economic activities. An example of this support is the **Inuvialuit Hunters Assistance Program**, administered by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Joint territorial and federal investment in small-scale agricultural initiatives is happening through an initiative called **NWT Growing Forward**. The aim of the **Small Scale Foods Program** is to establish market gardens in 25 communities across the NWT. Once established, community garden programs will be augmented with training, upgraded equipment and ongoing support to maximize efficiencies and yields.

Fisheries are particularly important to residents of smaller communities in the NWT. The subsistence catch makes a crucial contribution to a healthy diet, and commercial harvests offer an opportunity for cash in communities where income-earning opportunities are limited.

ARTS AND FINE CRAFTS

Territorial investments in arts and culture have doubled over the past 10 years and a **new regional office delivery model** for arts programming is underway to ensure smaller communities directly benefit from programs. The **Hide and Fur Procurement Program** provides traditional crafters with access to fur and hides at cost. Last fiscal year, the program sold $81,000 worth of fur and hides, generating estimated sales of $346,000 for the traditional crafters.

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

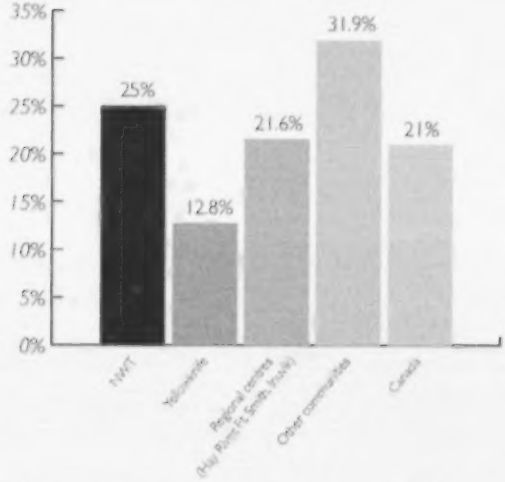
Mining and oil and gas development are the original and future economic drivers of the NWT. The diamond mining industry is the biggest contributor to the economy and is in decline. However, other resource extraction initiatives are on the horizon. A new **economic opportunities strategy** will prepare the territory for economic changes.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) delivers a range of **skills development programs** designed to help individuals prepare for and obtain employment, and to work with communities to remove employment barriers and create opportunities for developing the local work force. The **Small Communities Employment Support Program** increases workplace essential skills by providing wage subsidies to support training on the job, and by funding community based initiatives that offer project-based training. ECE also delivers programs through agreements with the Government of Canada, including **Building Essential Skills, Skills Development, Training-on-the-Job, Work Experience, Youth Employment, Employment Assistance Services, Community Initiatives,** and **Local Labour Market Partnerships.** Programs are delivered through regional ECE Service Centres.

The Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment, in collaboration with the Territorial Farmers Association and the NWT Literacy Council, has established the **Northern Farm Training Institute**, delivering living-classroom instruction for sustainable food production in the North.

Percentage of NWT Population With Less than a High School Diploma by Region, Compared to the Rest of Canada (2009)



Where do we need to do more?

Improve basic infrastructure to support business opportunities, reduce cost of living, and support the effective delivery of services

Invest in the development of a local skilled workforce, including greater opportunities for NWT residents to become ticketed in the trades

Diversify the economy through greater support for the traditional economy (arts and fine crafts, trapping), commercial agriculture, fishing, forestry, tourism and small business enterprise

How do we get there?

- Improve access to programs and services that promote new economic opportunities for Northerners.
- Invest in infrastructure and education so that there are more employment options for NWT residents.
- Develop more local sources of energy and food.

Research that Supports this Priority

Auditor General of Canada (2010). *Sustaining Development in the Northwest Territories.*

Conference Board of Canada (March 2013). *Territorial Outlook.* Available online: www.conferenceboard.ca

Priority 5:

Integrated Continuum of Services

What do we want?

Goal: NWT residents receive a continuum of integrated services according to their needs.

Poverty is a result of a diverse array of social, cultural and economic circumstances. There is no single solution. To make a difference we must work together to make better use of limited resources. While some government services and programs overlap those provided by other organizations, there are also gaps in service that need to be filled. There are particular challenges in delivering services in smaller communities with our widely dispersed population.

There is a need for coordination, collaboration, and a commitment to partnerships among all levels of government, including Aboriginal governments, service providers, and GNWT departments, so that programs and services are accessible and available. Coordination also ensures that program planning involves all necessary stakeholders and that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

What's Happening Now?

Examples of Current Initiatives Promoting Integrated Services

NWT Residents Said:

- *Programs and services that involve the community are the most successful.*
- *A collaborative interagency approach works in many communities.*
- *Good communication, collaboration and coordination of efforts are key to addressing factors of poverty.*
- *Strong families and traditional values work well for people. Traditional community events play an important role.*
- *Community coordinators and government service officers who provide information and help people access various support programs and services are important community resources.*

The GNWT Departments of Health and Social Services; Justice; and Education, Culture and Employment are working to improve the standards and guidelines for case management information sharing so that they can offer more **coordinated services and supports** to NWT residents.

Collaborative partnerships between departments and agencies are being supported by the GNWT. The Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Education, Culture and Employment work closely on the NWT Arts Strategy. The Departments of Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment have recently renewed the **10-year framework for Early Childhood Development**. This joint initiative will renew the government's commitment to invest in early childhood development, including concrete ways to integrate programs and services and harmonize policies.

The GNWT allocated funding for three additional **Government Service Officer (GSO)** positions in 2013/14. This brings the total number of GSOs to 15. GSOs spend much of their time helping elders and others in the community access government benefits, including explaining the programs that exist, interpreting into Aboriginal languages, completing applications, phoning agencies like CPP/OAS to problem-solve, and checking on the status of applications. Staff provide support during home visits and at the office, where online supports are also available. All current staff are local, Aboriginal women and almost all speak their Aboriginal languages.

The **Coalition Against Family Violence** brings government and non-government entities together to reduce the incidence of family violence and to more effectively respond to family. Coalition members collaborate on projects, including developing community interagency protocols, providing services to regions without shelters, and the YWCA's program for children who witness abuse. There are 23 member organizations, including Status of Women Council of the NWT, Native Women's Association, Centre for Northern Families, Family Support Centre in Hay River, Sutherland House in Fort Smith, the RCMP and Victim Services.

Where do we need to do more?

Improve support for community-based organizations in the effective and efficient delivery of programs to meet the needs of residents

All orders of government and community-based organizations need to get better at working together as partners on shared priorities

Access points to social programs and services need to be streamlined and simplified, including appropriate referrals

How are we going to get there?

- Multi-year funding is needed to stabilize programming and reduce administrative burden.
- With strong leadership from the GNWT, all stakeholders need to organize around shared interests and partner to build system capacity.
- Better integration and coordination of services through a one-window approach.

Research that Supports this Priority

Wilson, J. (2009). *Poverty Reduction Policies and Reduction: Northwest Territories.* Social Development Report Series

Sabin, J. (2011) *Yellowknife's Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector: A Portrait of a Northern Social Economy.* SERRNoCa Research Report Series.

Roles, Responsibilities and Moving Forward Together

Eliminating poverty in the NWT is a long-term process and a complex challenge, and the solutions rely on Northerners working together across geographic and political boundaries. Every one of us has a role to play. Individuals, communities, local service organizations and businesses are often best situated to respond immediately to social challenges. They can develop solutions that respond to local needs, priorities, and capacities. Our ability to take care of ourselves and one another is made possible by these grassroots community connections and services. Some successful initiatives are already in place and we want to learn from and build on these.

Aboriginal governments play a large role in dealing with poverty and most are now making wellness programming and education, including early childhood development, major governance priorities. With the changing face of governance brought about by land claim settlements and on-going self-government processes, their leadership on poverty reduction will continue to expand. Work in this regard will go a long way towards addressing root causes of poverty.

Individuals, Families and Communities	Non-profit Service Organizations	Business Community	Aboriginal and Public Governments (municipal, territorial, federal)
Promote your own well-being, strive for independence and care for each other. Get involved in your community through social activities, community service, and workforce participation. Become a change agent: support the vision and goals set out in the Anti-Poverty Framework through local action.	Create opportunities for community participation and working together towards a common goal. Provide a venue for people to share knowledge and awareness of social issues. Deliver social supports and services that respond to local needs. Act as a bridge between government and the public.	Provide Northerners with opportunities for success in employment, training and life-long learning. Ensure employees are productive by promoting health and well-being in the workplace. Contribute to economic prosperity and the quality of life of NWT residents. Respond to the changing demands of the economy.	Promote the social, cultural, and economic well-being of local communities. Facilitate collaboration between groups to respond to social issues. Champion the vision, principles, and outcomes of the Anti-Poverty Framework. Encourage and support communities in addressing local needs. Ensure vulnerable people are protected and safe. Stimulate the economy and create job opportunities for residents. Set standards and legislation to achieve social goals. Deliver services and supports directly or through partnerships. Support research and the sharing of information and knowledge on poverty reduction and social well-being.

Some roles and responsibilities are governed by laws that may constrain or enable social policy actions. However, the GNWT will champion action on the five priorities of this anti-poverty strategic framework. The GNWT will also seek partnerships, support communities, and act as a coordinating force between Aboriginal, federal, and municipal governments, and communities as we act on our goals.

While all sectors need to work together on all elements of the strategic framework, and develop cohesive plans, the following graphic shows some of the critical areas where each sector will need to play a leadership role.

GNWT Leadership in the Context of the 17th Legislative Assembly Caucus Priorities

Acknowledging the need for cooperation does not mean avoiding responsibility. The GNWT has a central role in championing poverty elimination, and sees its role as a convener, influencer and partner in this process. The GNWT will use this framework for action as a filter to screen investments and determine whether policies and programs in education, health care, employment, and social services contribute to the

goals of poverty reduction and community inclusion. This framework will also be used to support the development of sound economic policies and priorities. We invite all other stakeholders – Aboriginal governments, NGOs, the business community and labour organizations – to explore how they might also use these priorities in their social and economic planning.

The 17th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories began its term by developing a vision for "strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous NWT." Taking action on poverty is an essential part of fulfilling this vision. As we prepare our territory for the opportunities that exist under devolution, self-government and increasing economic development, we commit to addressing the inequalities that prevent the most marginalized citizens from accessing and succeeding in education and the workforce.

The areas for action identified by community participants to reduce poverty are very well aligned with the goals and priorities of the 17th Legislative Assembly of the NWT.[8] All GNWT departments are focusing their efforts on initiatives to meet these goals and priorities. The fact that the recommended areas for action on poverty links well with prior direction to the GNWT from elected officials is promising. It means that although more work is needed, we are on the right track.

The five priorities in this strategic framework match the 17th Assembly's goals and priorities.

Children and Family Support	*Healthy Living and Reaching Our Potential*	*Safe and Affordable Housing*	*Sustainable Communities*	*Integrated Continuum of Services*
Healthy, educated people free from poverty	*Healthy, educated people free from poverty*	*Address housing needs*	*Sustainable, vibrant, safe communities*	*Effective and efficient government*

[8] *Believing In People And Building On The Strengths Of Northerners*

Links to GNWT Strategies and Initiatives

A framework to address poverty cannot be a single, stand-alone initiative, but must comprise elements from many other strategies and be developed hand-in-hand with sound social and economic development strategies and initiatives. These strategies are led by many different departments, all of whom must work together and in partnership with the not-for-profit community and industry.

The vision of the Members of the 17th Legislative Assembly is: "Strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories".

Just as government alone cannot effect change, no one strategy can achieve this vision. Social policy strategies such as anti-poverty and early childhood development cannot be effective in isolation and require all partners to work together. Social, economic and environmental strategies and policies interact with and complement each other. For instance, a strong economy is sustained by having communities that are attractive and welcoming, and it is strengthened by having social policies that help NWT residents achieve their full potential. Similarly, land use plans and economic opportunities strategies need to be linked to sustainable community initiatives and the health of physical environments - from clean air to safe drinking water - to sustain the health of the people who live in them.

GNWT departments are working together and with our partners to develop and implement a number of key frameworks, strategies and plans that, taken together, will create the right conditions to achieve our collective vision and sustain it for future generations.

Where to go from Here:

Moving Forward Together

As we move to the next stage of this Framework for Action, it will be critical for the GNWT, Aboriginal governments, communities, NGOs and the private sector to work closely together. Over the coming months, a detailed **Implementation Plan** will be created so there will be actions associated with this Framework for all orders of government and facets of NWT communities. A collaborative approach will ensure that the implementation plan reflects all the valuable work that is being done to reduce poverty in the NWT by partner organizations and governments. All those who want to be involved in a territory-wide plan to address poverty should take their seat at the table.

To ensure we stay on track, measure success and respond to new issues that emerge, it will be vitally important to build in a **comprehensive monitoring, reporting, and evaluation plan**. This will include the identification and collection of relevant socio-economic data and regular analysis of information collected to determine progress toward preventing and reducing social inequities in the NWT. Many groups in the NWT are doing an excellent job of gathering their own indicators on social development. We want to learn from this work and see it expand. Building on the work that is already taking place, the GNWT will coordinate the development of a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Framework Performance Measurement Plan with strategic outcomes and performance measures to guide our work. The evaluation plan will be focused on measures that can serve as outcomes of the Framework's goals for children and families, healthy living, housing, sustainable communities and integration of services.

Appendix A:

Background on the Framework Development Process

This strategic framework is the result of over three years of collaborative effort by individuals and organizations committed to developing a territorial plan to address poverty. This process was initiated by the non-profit sector in December 2009. They pooled research substantiating the need for new ways to alleviate poverty. Their work led the 17th Legislative Assembly to identify the need for a comprehensive territorial strategic framework on poverty.

We know people are best served when organizations work together to address social issues[9]. With this in mind, an interagency Steering Committee was established of non-governmental, Aboriginal and federal and GNWT representatives. The Steering Committee led a process of broad community engagement over two years so that communities and governments could identify solutions to poverty together. The GNWT provided funding and logistical support to the engagement process and GNWT representatives participated as stakeholders.

Methods of Community Input

2010 No Place for Poverty Workshop and Report

Strategy Steering Committee

2012 Anti-Poverty Roundtable Discussions in Hay River and Inuvik

Solicited Feedback from Aboriginal Leadership

Draft Strategy feedback sessions in 4 communities

Intercept Surveys with residents identified as low-income and NWT-wide online feedback survey

[9] *A Social Agenda for the NWT* Guiding Principle

Research and Community Voices Shaped Framework Priorities

To ensure broad input on issues and priorities associated with poverty, several approaches were taken to obtain community feedback. Between 2010 and 2012, three major gatherings were held in Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik, which provided a foundation for developing this framework for action. This included the 2010 No Place for Poverty Workshop, which was organized by Alternatives North and the YWCA in Yellowknife, and two roundtables to develop a territorial anti-poverty strategic framework. Together, these consultations involved more than 250 people from across the Northwest Territories. The discussions benefited from a wide range of voices, including government representatives, non-profit organizations, front-line service providers and residents who have experienced poverty.

Once a draft strategic framework was completed, follow-up face-to-face meetings were held in Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Providence and Inuvik with people who attended the roundtable sessions and further feedback was provided on whether the strategic framework met expectations. Further changes were made based on this feedback, including a call for the GNWT to clearly outline what, as a public government, is being done to reduce poverty and what further steps will be taken.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, several other data collection methods were used to capture northerners' views on poverty. The Steering Committee heard the views of many stakeholders, including front-line workers, community members, students, seniors, business representatives, non-governmental organizations and community leaders. Methods of engagement included focus groups, one-on-one interviews, an Internet-based survey, and Photo-voice: a process using picture-taking and storytelling to examine issues.

Key Documents

The 2010 *No Place for Poverty Workshop Report* by Alternatives North and the YWCA and the 2011 *What We Heard from Northerners about Poverty* document by the GNWT capture much of the information from these exercises. Both summarize stakeholders' stated priorities for action on poverty reduction and were guiding documents in the development of this framework. In addition to these key documents, academic research and reports on best practices in poverty reduction from other jurisdictions in Canada informed the framework's development.

Kīspin ki nitawihtīn ā nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwēsinēn.

Cree

ʔerihtł'ís dëne sųłiné yati t'a huts'elkër xa beyéyati theʔa ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ën yółti.

Chipewyan

If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

English

Si vous voulez ces renseignements en français, contactez-nous.

Français

Jii gwandak izhii ginjìk vat'atr'ijąhch'uu zhìt yinohthan jì', diits'àt ginohkhìi.

Gwich'in

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

ᑕᒃᓂᐊ ᑎᑎᖅᑲᐃᑦ ᐱᓕᒍᐱᑦ ᐃᓄᒃᑎᑐᖅᓯᒪᓕᒃᑐᑎᒃ, ᐅᕙᑦᑎᓐᓄᑦ ᐅᖅᑲᓕ ᔪᓐᓇᖅᑐᑎᑦ.

Inuktitut

UVANITTUAQ ILITCHURISUKUPKU INUVIALUKTUN, QUQUAQLUTA.

Inuvialuktun

K'éhshó got'ıne xədǝ́ k'é hederi ʔedıhtl'é yeriniwę nídé dúle.

North Slavey

Edi gondı dehgéh got'ıe zhatié k'ǫ́ǫ́ edatł'éh enahddhę nide naxets'é edahí.

South Slavey

Tłıchǫ yati k'ǫ̀ǫ̀ dè wegodì wek'èhoızǫ nǫ̀ǫwǫ dè, gots'ǫ̀ goahde.

Tłıchǫ

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